

EXHIBIT 53

Confederate Monument Hearing - Larry Gillespie

Confederate Monument Hearing

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To:Brent Larson <BLarson@lafayettecoms.com>; Larry Gillespie <LGillespie@lafayettecoms.com>; David Rikard <DRikard@lafayettecoms.com>; Chad McLarty <chadmclarty4@gmail.com>; Mike Roberts <mike@robertsbenefits.com>;

Gentlemen,

I understand you have a hearing scheduled to consider the Confederate monument at the courthouse. I am a proponent of preserving history and the symbols and monuments that remind us of history. I have several Confederate ancestors, have done extensive research on that era and there are letters written by my ancestors while serving in the 32nd Mississippi Infantry preserved in the Ole Miss library. To say that I despise those that would remove the monuments and erase history would be an understatement. However, what I hope to do here is give you reasons to maintain the monument in its present location.

You took an oath, just as I did when I entered the military and as a civil service employee, to uphold the US Constitution. The 14th Amendment obligates you to provide equal protection of the laws. The intolerant opposition demands that you remove property that belongs to the people of Lafayette County. Others like me want the monument maintained where it is. You are basically being asked to take sides in an issue when it is not necessary. They want you to grant their request which will anger those who want the monument left alone. There are issues that you are required to choose one side against another but I suggest this is not one of those issues. The door is wide open for you to take a neutral position and provide equal protection of the laws by not taking sides in this issue. How radical would it be to hear both sides and decide to do nothing? Or better yet, decide to abide by our Mississippi Historical Protection laws.

I have long maintained that giving in to the demands of these intolerant groups is just pouring fuel on the fire. We already know that it will not end when the Confederate monuments are gone because other famous monuments have also been attacked. Confederate monuments are not preventing these groups from erecting their own monuments and after over 100 years none of these people experienced life as slaves. They are acting out of intolerance because they have been successful in previous attacks and that does not obligate you to join in their agenda. Remain neutral and don't take sides.

Raymond Settle